

Rhode Island - EQIP Policy Decisions for Fiscal Year 2005 FINAL

These policies are effective for the Fiscal Year 2005 EQIP Program.

Cutoff Date for 2005 EQIP Application Period

The State Conservationist established a **cutoff date of December 15th, 2004** for the 2005 EQIP Program. Applications received after December 15, 2004 will be considered for a second ranking period or next year's program. Applicants that meet the December 15th deadline must complete ALL eligibility requirements prior to February 18, 2005 to maintain eligibility for the funding allocated in the first FY 05 ranking period. See *EQIP Application Requirements* for all paperwork and other criteria that must be established prior to February 18, 2005.

Agricultural Producer Eligibility Criteria

In RI, the following must be met to be determined an agricultural producer for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):

1. In order to be considered an agricultural producer, there must be a minimum of \$2500 or more of agricultural products produced and sold each year, or that normally would have been sold each year for two of the last five years. The following exceptions apply:
 - a. Limited resource producers must meet the minimum National criteria, which states "in order to be considered an agricultural producer, there must be a minimum of \$1000 or more of agricultural products produced and sold each year, or that normally would have been sold each year for two of the last five years."
 - b. Forest landowners must own a minimum of ten (10) acres of forest land and there must be a minimum of \$1000 or more of agricultural products produced and sold each year, or that normally would have been sold each year for two of the last five years. In addition, producers with forest land must meet one of the following:
 - i. A forest management plan or forest stewardship plan, or
 - ii. A prior record of timber harvest or revenue from timber sales, or
 - iii. Proof of capital investment on forest practices such as:
 1. tree plantings
 2. forest stand improvement
 3. site preparation
 4. other agro forestry practices
2. For Horse operations, there must be a minimum of \$2500 or more of agricultural products produced and sold each year, or that normally would have been sold each year for two of the last five years; plus there must be a minimum of 5 Animal Units (an animal unit is defined as 1000 lbs. of live weight, so 5 animal units must equal 5000 lbs., or approximately 3-4 horses, depending on their size) and 5 undeveloped acres with non-hydric soil contiguous to the barn, unless granted an exception by the State Conservationist. Stabling operations, without the production of food, fiber or breed stock, are ineligible.

For all of the above, agricultural products include, but are not limited to, crops and livestock produced for food, fiber, breeding stock, plus ornamentals, seed crops, trees and other agro-forestry products,

All producers who think they meet the qualifications listed above MUST provide a summary of the crops and/or livestock produced and/or sold for each of the last five years. In addition, for each year, please list the number of acres in production by crop type, and/or list the number of acres grazed for livestock operations, as applicable. Or, if preferable, applicants may provide a copy of IRS Schedule F form for each of the last five years, in lieu of the summary of crops/livestock produced.

Agricultural Waste Management System Planning

NRCS requires a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) as a condition of eligibility for EQIP if a waste treatment facility is planned or needed. See the *CNMP Fact Sheet* for more information on what is required to be addressed in a CNMP. In RI, two practices will trigger the requirement for a CNMP: waste storage structure and/or compost facility. EQIP Manual 515.111a states that “A CNMP must be developed prior to the implementation of a waste storage/treatment facility. CNMP implementation is to be completed no later than three years after the installation of the waste storage or treatment facility, unless a waiver is granted by the State Conservationist.” As such, waste storage facilities will not be scheduled in the first year of an EQIP contract unless a CNMP has been developed and approved prior to contract development. This policy also requires that all practices identified in the CNMP, including land treatment practices needed where wastes are applied, must be completed within three years of installing a waste storage facility.

Irrigation and Irrigation Water Management

According to Sections 515.62 b and 515.92 b of the EQIP Manual, “eligible land will not be eligible for irrigation practices if the land has not been irrigated for two out of the past five years”. In RI, eligibility for cost share on irrigation practices is limited to replace existing irrigation systems or where existing water withdrawals may cause or exacerbate low flows in watersheds. Existing irrigation systems are defined as those that are normally used in agricultural settings, such as, but not limited to, lay-flat or aluminum pipes, high impact sprinklers, and traveling guns. Tank trucks and garden hoses do not qualify as an existing system. In addition only irrigation systems that can achieve an overall decrease in existing water use as determined by NRCS are eligible for EQIP. In addition, irrigators using more than 8500 gallons per day will be required to implement an Irrigation Water Management plan as part of their EQIP contract. In addition, all producers requesting cost share assistance with any irrigation practice must install a functioning flow meter. Cost share is allowed on the flow meter.

Limited Resource Producers and Beginning Farmers

Limited Resource Producers and Beginning Farmers are eligible for a higher cost share rate, according to EQIP Manual 515.81c. Any applicant seeking to receive the higher cost-share rate as either Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer must certify eligibility in block 7a when they submit the CCC-1200 application form. Definitions for both can be found in the section noted above, as well as on the CCC-1200. Cost-share rates for limited resource producers and beginning farmers are 90% for all practices except certain management practices which provide a 100% incentive payment.

New or Expanding Livestock Operations

According to Section 515.82c of the EQIP Manual, the State Conservationist is responsible for developing a ranking process that gives higher priority to applications that address national priorities and

optimize environmental benefits. Using the guidance provided, the State Conservationist has determined that implementing practices on existing operations should be given priority over practices proposed on new or expanding operations.

For Existing Operations:

- Highest priority is on existing livestock operations with the most significant natural resource concerns.
- 100% of environmental benefit points are allowed for the proposed animal waste management facilities.

For New or Expanding Operations:

- Highest priority is on the most significant natural resource concerns.
- A new operation includes any new enterprises on an existing operation.
- An expanding operation is one whose plans include increasing the number of animal units more than 25% over the life of an EQIP contract.
- 75% of environmental benefit points are allowed for the proposed animal waste management facilities.

Cost Sharable Conservation Practices

Eligible practices for cost share are those on the 2005 EQIP Practice List.

EQIP applicants may submit a request to the State Conservationist for cost share on innovative or new practices not shown on the 2005 Practice List, according to EQIP manual (515.91f). However, cost share will not be provided until interim practice standards are developed and approved by the State Conservationist, with input from the State Technical Committee.

Cost Sharable Conservation Practices on Private, Non-Industrial Forestland

Structural and management practices for forestland shall be considered for cost sharing under EQIP when the primary purpose(s) of the practice is improvement of water quality, reduction of sediment yield, wildlife or pest management. Practices whose sole purpose is to enhance production are not eligible for EQIP cost sharing. Silvicultural practices shall be included in a forest management plan prepared by a Rhode Island Certified Forester. Practice eligibility shall be determined by NRCS in consultation with the forester preparing the plan or a certified forester retained by NRCS.

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